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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: COMMON WORLD FORUM MINISTERIAL BRINGS  
TOGETHER THE MUSLIM WORLD AND THE WEST

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad led the U.S. delegation to the October 17 Common World Forum ministerial meeting in Astana. Aimed at promoting understanding between the Muslim world and the West, the Forum brought together foreign ministers and high-level representatives from over 50 countries and several international organizations. In his speech opening the event, President Nazarbayev said the idea for the Forum came from Kazakhstan's own experiences as a multi-ethnic state. The speeches of most of the participants were non-controversial. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, however, used his remarks to sharply criticize Georgia. Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki argued that the West's secularism and liberal democracy breeds extremism and called for alternatives to Western approaches. Ambassador Khalilzad stressed the need for success in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The Forum's final communique, the Astana Declaration, remained unsettled until the end, as delegations sought to amend the text while the ministerial was ongoing. The uncertainty was cut short by Foreign Minister Tazhin, who simply declared the Astana Declaration unanimously adopted. END SUMMARY.

HIGH-LEVEL ATTENDANCE

13. (SBU) U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad led the U.S. delegation at the October 17 ministerial meeting of the Common World Forum, an initiative of President Nazarbayev aimed at promoting understanding between the Muslim world and the West. Over 50 countries were represented at the event, as well as several international organizations. Notable attendees included Russia Foreign Minister Lavrov, Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki, and Organization of Islamic States (OIC) Secretary

General Ihsanoglu. A number of Asian and Middle Eastern countries were represented by foreign ministers, in large part because on the preceding day, Astana hosted the ministerial meeting of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue. High-level foreign ministry representatives from such Western countries as Estonia, Norway, Hungary, Greece, Poland, and the Netherlands also attended. A number of other Western countries, including Great Britain, Austria, Canada, Germany, and Italy, were represented by their ambassadors to Kazakhstan. The overall impressive turnout was to an extent the result of a persistent lobbying campaign on the part of the Kazakhstani government.

#### SPEECHES PAY TRIBUTE TO DIVERSITY

14. (SBU) President Nazarbayev delivered opening remarks at the event. He told the participants that the idea for the Common World Forum came from Kazakhstan's own experience as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state. Highlighting that Kazakhstan is home to over 130 ethnic groups and over 40 religious denominations, he said that the "desire to strengthen global dialogues is driven by Kazakhstan's domestic reality." "We've developed our own successful model of tolerance," he said. He reminded the participants about Kazakhstan's other achievements in promoting dialogue among different "civilizations," including through the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building in Asia (CICA) and the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. He also made reference to Kazakhstan's "Way to Europe" program aimed at increasing cooperation with Europe across a number of spheres.

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#### RUSSIA BRINGS IN UNIPOLARITY, GEORGIA

15. (SBU) Most of the ministerial was taken up by three sessions, ostensibly on the topics of deepening ties between the Muslim World and the West, dealing with global hotbeds of instability, and addressing Islamophobia and Westernophobia. With a number of speakers scheduled for each session, there was little time remaining for discussion. The majority of the speakers delivered remarks that were non-controversial, with most welcoming Kazakhstan's initiative and highlighting the work of their own countries in increasing inter-religious and inter-cultural understanding.

16. (U) Russian Foreign Lavrov, however, departed from the generally collegial mood of the Forum to emphatically push points on unipolarity and Georgia. The first to speak after all the opening remarks, Lavrov warned the participants of the dangers a "unipolar world" brings to stability and diversity. "The world is divided into civilizations, where one civilization dominates the others," he asserted. He pointed to "recent ideological rhetoric" that was creating "discord rather than dialogue" and forcing countries into "opposing blocs of so-called 'liberal democracies' and 'authoritarian capitalism.'" Lavrov went on to sharply criticize Georgia, arguing that during the South Ossetia conflict, Georgia not only killed innocent civilians, but destroyed numerous cultural sites, including numerous UNESCO world heritage structures, erasing a part of the region's multicultural history. He asserted that Georgia's threat to multiculturalism was one of the reasons behind Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia: Russia had to protect both to assure that the "multicultural nature of the Caucasus is not destroyed." He closed by saying that Russia "will continue to strive to protect human rights and fight against unipolarity."

#### MOTTAKI CALLS FOR ALTERNATIVE TO WESTERN "UNILATERALISM"

17. (U) In remarks that appeared somewhat disjointed, perhaps because of poor simultaneous interpretation, Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki was less sharp than Lavrov, but nevertheless criticized the West for pushing a particular "unilateral"

ideology onto the rest of the world. "Dialogue is the very spirit of our culture," he asserted, "and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights leaves no room for unilateralism." The roots of Islamaphobia lie in the artificial polarity created by "Western liberal democracy and secularism," he maintained, and "the West and its liberal democratic model are a certain threat to the rest of the world." "Why should humanity be subject to a split between material and spiritual needs?" he asked. Liberal democracies do not understand Islam, Mottaki asserted, but some are continuing to negotiate with extremists in the Middle East. "We need to review our methods, need to understand the underlying pathologies in order to better deal with Islamophobia," he went on. "Western thought is not the only way to resolve issues," asserted Mottaki in closing, rather "we need new national and international laws to combat racism and protect religion."

#### AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD STRESSES U.S. SUPPORT FOR MUSLIMS

¶8. (U) In his remarks, Ambassador Khalilzad stressed the importance of fighting Al-Qaeda, which lost ground in Iraq, but still has global reach. He emphasized the need for success in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Ambassador Khalilzad pointed out the sacrifices Americans have made in both "lives and treasure" to support and protect Muslims in

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other countries, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and Kuwait. From his perspective as an American Muslim, he underscored that U.S. society is not anti-Muslim: while there are some elements of anti-Islamic prejudice, there is equality before the law and a commitment to equal opportunity.

#### TAZHIN DECLARES UNANIMOUS ADOPTION OF ASTANA DECLARATION

¶9. (SBU) The final text of the Astana Declaration, the non-binding final communique of the Forum, remained uncertain up until the last minute. The MFA organized an eleventh-hour meeting the night before the ministerial to "consolidate and finalize" proposed amendments to the text. Discussions, however, continued on the sidelines during the ministerial itself, with the EU dissatisfied with the Declaration's language on freedom of expression (the text called for "responsible use of the freedom of expression") and the Dutch, standing on their own, opposed to a reference to Saudi King Abdullah's interfaith conference (on the grounds that it brought together only Muslims, Christians, and Jews, not all religions). At the end of the Forum, Foreign Minister Tazhin, to the surprise of a number of delegations given the outstanding issues, simply announced that the Astana Declaration had been adopted by consensus. (NOTE: The final text, to which the United States had no objections, has been emailed to the Department. END NOTE.)

¶10. (U) Ambassador Khalilzad did not/not clear this cable.  
HOAGLAND